

# SCDDSN Individual Employment Services Pilot

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## Context:

Since 2008, the South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (SCDDSN) has promoted the “Employment First” approach to service delivery. This approach assumes that employment is the preferred day service option for working age adults with disabilities. It also promotes employment over non-work services as the primary option for adult consumers (at first contact, and through all contacts) and seeks to provide desired employment services promptly, without making non-work services prerequisite.

Despite embracing the “Employment First” philosophy, SCDDSN has not seen consistent implementation within its network of contracted providers. This is due to a number of factors, not the least of which was learning that Medicaid would no longer fund rehabilitation services for people with intellectual and related disabilities (ID/RD). This shift in Medicaid policy interfered with the implementation of “Employment First” by focusing attention on moving nearly 2,100 consumers from rehabilitation services to the Community Supports Waiver so that they could continue to receive Day Services.

Presently, there are 43 approved providers of Employment Services – Individual (S06) on SCDDSN’s Qualified Provider List (QPL). Of these 43 approved providers, only 29 are actually providing this service to one or more consumers. The remaining 14 providers, which include 10 DSN Boards, are not providing this service.

Over the last two (2) years, DDSN has sought and received input from many provider agencies concerning barriers to successfully supporting consumers who desire individual, integrated employment. Additionally, an Employment Task Force, made up of seasoned Employment Specialists from around the state, was formed at the request of the Human Service Providers Association’s Day Services Committee and charged with recommending system changes that would alleviate/mitigate these barriers. The Task Force’s recommendations are reflected in this proposed pilot project.

## Proposal:

SCDDSN intends to prioritize Employment Services – Individual across the state and increase the capacity to support consumers with ID/RD in obtaining and maintaining individual, integrated employment. To that end, the agency proposes to pilot a new funding structure with a combination of providers currently serving consumers AND at least one provider not currently serving any consumers in Employment Services – Individual. Preferably, there will be at least one public and one private provider participating, as well as one serving an urban area and one serving exclusively rural areas. The purpose is to determine how successful and sustainable the proposed structure is (1) for starting up a program and (2) for improving/expanding an existing program. Participating providers will be partnering with SCDDSN to increase employment outcomes for consumers exiting school; to maintain employment for consumers placed by the provider, schools and/or the SC Vocational Rehabilitation Department (VR); and to demonstrate what level of support is required to maintain employment and to regain employment when employment is lost. The proposed structure is as follows.

### *Slot Allocations and Base Funding*

SCDDSN will allocate for each provider in the pilot six (6) newly created Band P slots (in addition to any Band A and Band J slots already allocated) to be used to serve consumers in Employment Services – Individual for a period of two (2) years. This number of slots is hypothesized to be the critical mass needed to start service delivery. Each slot will be assigned a value of \$10,000 per year, \$7,000 of which will be paid in one lump sum at the beginning of the year, for a maximum total funding of \$60,000 per year for each provider. This funding amount (which is greater than current “Band A” funding) is intended to cover the cost of a full-time Employment Specialist, including fringe benefits, as well as the transportation costs associated with providing the service and some administrative costs.

For each consumer for whom all of the Band P performance measures (below) are achieved, the provider will be allocated a newly created Band Q slot for Career Support Services. Band Q will be assigned a value of \$1,000 annually, \$200 of which will be paid prospectively in quarterly pro-rated payments. The provider will be expected to assist Band Q consumers in maintaining (or in the case of job loss/dissatisfaction, regaining/changing) competitive employment and meeting career objectives (e.g., advancement, shift schedule changes, earned wage increases, benefits, job change, etc.) by serving as a resource to both the employer and the consumer-employee. In addition to consumers who obtain employment while being served in Band P, up to four (4) additional consumers can be allocated a Band Q slot if they obtain employment via Vocational Rehabilitation or School District efforts and are subsequently transitioned to the provider for extended services (i.e. follow along / Career Support Services).

### *Slot Assignments*

When filling allocated Band P slots, **the first priority will be to enroll consumers who have exited the school system within the prior 24 months or who have yet to receive a Day Service since exiting the school system.** If there are not enough consumers in this population who are interested in receiving Employment Services – Individual to fill all of the allocated slots, then providers may award remaining slots to consumers who have been receiving facility-based services, but who are interested in obtaining a competitive job in an integrated setting as well as consumers awaiting services. The provider will be required to notify SCDDSN of who is being served in each slot and which category he/she belongs to (i.e., recently exited school, served in facility-based services or awaiting services).

### *Performance Measures, Reporting and Paybacks*

#### **Band P**

In order to earn the full amount assigned to each Band P slot, the provider must achieve the series of performance measures below. Each of these milestones is assigned a dollar value below. It is assumed that measures 1,2 and 7 will be met, and payment for these milestones are included in the lump sum payment. For each measure numbered 3 – 6 that is achieved for a funded slot, the assigned value for that measure will be paid in addition to the prospective payment for that slot. Providers will report quarterly which measures were met during the quarter for each consumer served in the pilot and will submit supporting documentation; SCDDSN will then send payment for those outcome benchmarks.

1. The provider must complete the referral process, resulting in a signed service agreement.\*  
\$1,500

2. The provider must develop and implement an individual plan for obtaining employment which includes Community Based Instruction and Job Development activities and document such.\*  
\$2,250
3. The provider must successfully support the consumer in obtaining employment and create a record of employment documenting the details of the placement. The consumer must obtain a job working 10+ hours per week (or 20 hours per 2-week period) in an integrated setting – defined as a job that a non-disabled citizen is eligible to apply for and hold – that pays minimum wage or better and be paid directly by the employer. \*  
\$1,500
4. During and following the standard on-the-job training offered by the employer, the provider must identify any long-term support needs, develop a strategic training plan for job stabilization and implement that plan (including evaluating progress on the training areas), resulting in the satisfaction of the employer and the consumer-employee.\*  
\$1,000
5. The provider must conduct follow along contact with the consumer and/or employer at least monthly for six (6) months to continually assess the success of the placement and to identify and address any further long-term support needs to ensure job retention.\*  
\$300
6. At the completion of the six-month follow along, the provider must again secure documentation of the satisfaction of both the employer and the consumer-employee, conduct an exit interview and move the consumer from band P to Band Q (by notifying Richard Wnek at SCDDSN).\*  
\$200
7. A minimum of 65 hourly units of service per slot must be provided and reported for the year. **When one consumer is successfully placed, trained, stabilized, followed along and moved to Band Q with a successful outcome, another can be served using the vacated slot; and, the combined units of services for the two consumers count toward the annual service provision requirement for that allocated slot.**  
*This performance measure (#7) is worth \$3,250 of the funding for the slot (\$50 for each required unit of service).*

**\* Achievement of these measures can be documented using the forms already in use for this service (e.g. Individual Plan for Supported Employment, Employer Satisfaction Form, Customer Satisfaction Form and Instructional Strategy Plan or Plan of Instruction). The provider will be required to assign a specific consumer to each slot and notify SCDDSN of the assignments.**

**Note: By completing the referral process, developing and implementing a plan and providing the minimum number of hourly units of service, providers are assured of \$7,000 for each slot, regardless of outcomes. However, the opportunity exists to earn significantly more than the current “Band A” funding amount for each Band P slot by providing effective Employment Services that result in successful employment outcomes for the consumers served.**

**If all Band P performance measures are met for a consumer and he/she is moved to a Band Q slot before the end of the year, another consumer can be served in the vacated Band P slot. And, the provider can earn up to an additional \$3,000 (above the \$10,000 value for the slot) for each additional consumer served (actual earnings depend on the achievement of performance measures 3 – 6 for the additional consumer(s) served).**

Band Q

In order to earn the full amount paid for each Band Q slot, the provider must achieve the performance measures below. It is assumed that measure #1 will be met, and payment for that milestone is included in the prospective payment. For each quarter that measure #2 is achieved for a funded slot, the pro-rated portion of the assigned value for that measure will be paid in addition to the prospective payments for that slot. Providers will report quarterly the consumers for whom measure #2 was met during the quarter and will submit supporting documentation; SCDDSN will then send payment for those outcome benchmarks.

1. The provider must conduct and document at least one Career Support activity per quarter (e.g., job performance assessment, employer/employee satisfaction appraisal, long-term support needs assessment, training on a new job duty, intervention requested by the employer, etc.)  
\$200
2. The provider must ensure that the consumer is employed (at least 10 hours per week, or 20 hours per 2-week period).  
\$800 (\$200 per quarter)

For each quarter in which the consumer is employed for any portion of the quarter, the provider will be paid \$200. In some quarters, it may require much more than one Career Support activity to achieve this performance measure.

### *SCDDSN Support*

In addition to the technical support that is generally available from the District Offices, Central Office personnel will provide in-person training (initial and/or refresher) on community-based instruction, job development, customized employment, job coaching and documentation of services to participating provider staff upon request.

### Discussion Points:

- Consumers served as part of this pilot will be entered as receiving Employment Services – Individual (S06) on STS but will not be allowed to bypass the waiting list to enroll in the CS Waiver.
- If a Band A consumer receiving facility-based services is selected for participation in this pilot, the Band A slot will be taken offline / converted to a Band P for the duration of the pilot.
- Any consumer leaving a facility-based service and assigned to a Band P slot can return to the facility-based service (over-enrolled until the end of the pilot) as a “safety net.” However, the provider’s funding for the Band P slot is still dependent upon achieving the performance measures for somebody.
- The ability to enroll consumers placed by VR/schools directly into Band Q is a back-end incentive to engage on the front end (i.e., during the school-age transition years) to become acquainted with students and collaborate with VR/school personnel.
- Any surplus funds from this pilot must be re-invested in the provider’s individual Employment Services and may not be diverted to support other programs/services, including other DDSN Day Services.
- Providers should advise consumers offered Employment Services – Individual as part of this pilot that there is no guarantee of continued services beyond the 2-year period. It is strongly recommended that providers prepare an acknowledgment form for consumers/families to sign stating that they understand this and agree to participate under those conditions.